

# D A N G E R S

## LETTER VI

Dear Friend,

In outlining the situation, I spoke of the **sufferings of Catholics**. Since Calvary, do you know of any more legitimate and poignant? Look to the East: what do you see? In Cochinchina, five hundred thousand Catholics, hunted down for three years like wild beasts, given over to the horrors of hunger, prisons and torture. In Syria, a veritable butchery of Christians: a massacre which, by the number of victims, the refinements of cruelty, the duration and extent of the extermination, stands out from all the others.

Look to the West: what a sight! The reign of the demon spreading with unheard-of rapidity; a whole world calling itself Christian, up in arms against God and Christ, spewing insults and blasphemy in every tone and language, **MOCKING THEIR AUTHORITY, THEIR PROMISES AND THEIR THREATS**. A whole family of baptized peoples, slandering the best of mothers, lavishing contempt on her, stripping her, driving her from her last refuge, and waging war against her more fiercely than they do against the Turk, slaughterer of their brothers.

The most sacred principles of public law, trampled underfoot with hitherto unparalleled cynicism; human liberty, the price of divine blood, betrayed and crucified; property, the family, shaken to their foundations; the hypocrisy of Judas, the cowardice of Pilate, felony under every name; then theft, banditry, humanism, set up as rights and even duties; finally and above all the ingratitude and insensitivity of the guilty : that's one corner of the picture.

See, on the other hand, this Old Man, much less venerable by his white hair than by his supreme dignity and his angelic gentleness, soaked in humiliations; this King, the most legitimate of all kings, who spent doing good, accused of

being an evildoer; this holy Pontiff who never stopped loving, praying and blessing, reserved for captivity or death; this Representative of the freedom of the world, condemned as a tyrant; this Father who cries and who asks in vain from those who call themselves his sons, if not consolations equal to his sorrows, at least the alms of some effective help in his extreme distress. No powerful voice responds to his, and he is reduced to saying: "I have nourished and raised children, and they have despised me."

So, Calvary in the East, Calvary in the West, and on both, our Mother Church, crowned with thorns and crucified: in the East, by infidels, in the West by her own children: Nothing is missing from the Golgotha scene. This, my dear friend, is the subject of our tears and the tears of all Catholics.

After the pains come the dangers. When the supreme attack on Rome is consummated, the despoilers and their followers will say: It's an accomplished fact, and they'll pretend not to think about it. We Catholics will say: It has barely begun. And we'll be on our guard. **The era of perils will have come**, *instabunt tempora periculosa* (*perilous times will come*). What am I saying? my friend, we're already there. Allow me to point out to you in this letter a very formidable danger, which too many have failed to avoid: the danger of sophistry.

(translator's note: per online cambridge dictionary '**sophistry**' : **the clever use of arguments that seem true but are really false, in order to deceive people**)

Satan is a liar by nature, *mendax*; he is the father of lies, *pater mendacii*. The first revolution was made by a lie, *eritis sicut dii*. Daughters of this one, all the others are made by the same process. The more serious they are, the more they lie. Now, today lies, hypocrisies, sophisms, woven with infernal art, circulate among us, more numerous than the atoms in the air. Volumes were not enough to contain them. I limit myself to pointing out two or three to you, around which an infinite number of others are grouped.

We have seen that, for the past four centuries, one of the most honest and above all constant occupations of Caesarian governments has been to despoil

the private churches. Made by the despoilers themselves, civil law has sanctioned the theft. It held, and wanted to be considered, as legitimate owners, the possessors of usurped goods.

With unprecedented audacity, the mother Church was asked to ratify the dispossession of her daughters. Threats of schism, hindrances of every kind to the exercise of its spiritual authority, nothing was omitted to extract its consent. In fear of greater evils, the Roman Church resigned itself to painful concessions, while demanding from governments a suitable indemnity for the dispossessed churches. This is the basis of all modern concordats.

What is the Revolution doing today? She turns against the mother the arguments successfully used against the daughters. For a long time the fire of rebellion has been blown in the Roman States: money, slander, sacrilegious derision, secret agents and accredited agents, open violence, everything has been done to make the temporal government of the Holy Father impossible. When the ground was mined and a spark was enough to determine the final explosion, the Pope was told: "Your position is no longer tenable. In your interest, and for the sake of public tranquility, recognize the fait accompli. Imitate Pius VI, your venerable predecessor, consent to the partial expropriation of your domains: you will lose nothing but embarrassment. As compensation, the Catholic nations, your devoted daughters, will give you a magnificent endowment.

"You cannot, most holy Father, find bad for the Church of Rome what you have found good for the other Churches. You have said to them: 'A violent act has dispossessed you of your possessions, We are deeply grieved; but against force there is no resistance.' For the good of souls, We renounce your rights; accept, in exchange, the stipulated treatment. Because you will be less wealthy, religion will not perish. "

Reduced to its simplest form, this honeyed speech is, if I may say so, an argument worthy of Mandrin. "I robbed you yesterday, so I have the right to rob you today. Yesterday you allowed yourself to be robbed, and good for you; to

resist today, apart from being perilous, would be to lack logic and lie to your precedents."

If the impertinence is odious, the sophistry is palpable. The painful concessions that the Holy See thought it could make to the detriment of the particular Churches, it cannot, at any price, make for itself. First of all, a solemn oath, sworn by every Sovereign Pontiff, opposes them. The interests of the universal Church are no less strongly opposed. This truth will soon become clear to you.

Whether the Churches of France or Spain, for example, are temporally dependent on governments; that this dependence more or less hinders their freedom of speech and action: it is a great misfortune, without doubt; but it is a local misfortune. These Churches, not being responsible for teaching all nations, neither the Catholic truth, nor the general government of the Church, will not essentially suffer from their servitude.

When it comes to the Church of Rome, the question is quite different. What becomes of the universal teaching of truth and the government of the Catholic world, if the metropolis of truth, the mistress of all the Churches, ceases to be fully independent? If it is not completely free in its words and deeds, how can its august Head fulfill the divine mission of confirming its brethren in the faith, everywhere and always? Even supposing he could do so, what would become of the authority of his teaching?

In the words of the Pope, stripped of his territorial independence, host, vassal or pensioner of any sovereign, we will always be inclined to fear the influence of the master. Malignity will seek it; the spirit of insubordination, ill will or national jealousy will know how to find it. Obedience ceases to be blind and filial: it hesitates; faith is over (done for).

With faith goes human freedom. That freedom which consists in resisting to the point of blood, rather than bending under the yoke of error and iniquity; that freedom to which the world owes all its glories, rests essentially on unshakeable faith in truth and justice. Render the authentic organ of both

suspect, and instead of obeying to the point of blood, man does not obey at all. The government of the Word has lost its authority; you have substituted it with the government of the sword.

In defending his independence, then, it is not Ancona, Bologna, Rome or any other piece of land that the Pope is defending: it is man's most glorious prerogative, the one of which he rightly shows himself to be the most jealous and proud: freedom, the freedom of all, the freedom of the world. We shall soon see that, in his heroic struggle, Pius IX defended something quite different.

Let's move on to a second sophism. "The Church, it is said, subsisted without territorial independence, and the government of the word was no less powerful. Territorial independence is therefore not necessary for the Church. "

It's mistaking fact for right; it's confusing times and circumstances, in order to confuse the issue and for the sake of one more sophism. Here's the truth: in establishing the Church, the Son of God gave it everything necessary to achieve its end. The end of the Church is the sanctification of souls through the free exercise of its spiritual authority. The material independence of the Roman Church is necessary for the exercise of the spiritual authority of the Holy Father, the supreme organ and head of the Church.

This has been declared twenty times in past centuries by the Vicars of Jesus Christ, and in modern times by Pius VI, in particular, and Pius IX. As you have just heard, common sense itself says it so clearly that there is no need to insist. The material independence of the Holy See is therefore by divine right.

No doubt the Roman Church didn't enjoy it from the outset. Would we want her to have possessed territorial independence, at the very center of an empire whose leader was Nero? But just because it wasn't currently attainable, the right was no less real, no less necessary. When she later claimed and exercised it, she didn't invent a new right, she simply proclaimed the right inherent in her constitution.

It is added that in the early centuries, when the Roman Church enjoyed no territorial independence, the government of the word was never more powerful.

I know, and the bloody annals of the martyrs are proof. So who gave the word of the Roman Pontiff its all-powerful authority? In the absence of material independence, the visible guarantee of the freedom of his teaching, Peter offered his moral independence: he gave his life.

In the middle of the amphitheater, under the ax of the executioners, under the teeth of the tigers, in the sight of an immense people, coming from all corners of the world, the Bishop of great Rome, the Father of Christians, stood courageously allowing himself to be sacrificed, guaranteed the truth of his teaching. From Nero to Diocletian, this is how the popes signed their bulls. "How," cries Pascal, "can we not believe in witnesses who allow themselves to be slaughtered?" So people believed: faith rested on martyrdom.

Could this state of affairs last forever? Was this a regular existence? Obviously not. Precisely because it was militant and had fought gloriously, the Church had to make conquests. By providing her with material independence, these conquests should, in order to authorize her word and command her faith, dispense her from martyrdom. This, my dear friend, is the deep-rooted reason for the independence the Church is being robbed of today: Satan knows what he's doing.

As this question touches on both the present and the future, I would like to add a few words. Of the sacred right to independence, the facts, in agreement with reasoning, show both its existence and its necessity. With regard to territorial independence, the life of the Church can be divided into four periods.

**THE FIRST, FROM THE BEGINNING TO CONSTANTINE.** At this time there is no territorial independence: and it is the era of persecutions and martyrdoms; it is Satan's empire over the world; it is, in the reign of the Church, a purely spiritual power, restricted to simple individuals.

**THE SECOND, FROM CONSTANTINE TO CHARLEMAGNE.** At this time, territorial independence was incomplete and poorly defined: and it was, as has been noted before<sup>24</sup>, the era of tribulations and incessant vexations of the Holy See;

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<sup>24</sup> Voir le théolog. Muzarelli : *Richesses du clergé*.

the era of heresies, swarming like tares in the field without sufficient defense of the father of the family; the era of the Church's struggles against Satan, who still competes with it step by step.

**THE THIRD, FROM CHARLEMAGNE TO THE REBIRTH OF PAGANISM.** At this time, complete and authentic territorial independence: and it is the social reign of the Church, replacing that of Satan; it is the visible royalty of Jesus Christ recognized everywhere; it is the defeat of all heresies, none of which is powerful enough to take root in the soil of the West.

**THE FOURTH, FROM THE REVIVAL OF PAGANISM TO US.** From this time on, the territorial independence of the Church was attacked again, and, as we have seen, long before Luther. This independence becomes more and more incomplete. Immediately the era of tribulations, schisms and heresies begins again. The social rule of the Church is visibly weakening, and that of evil is growing in similar proportions.

Finally, even today, the Church is being returned to its state of complete dependence and purely spiritual power, reigning, as in the days of the catacombs, over mere individuals. Caesar and the Pope are about to come face to face. God forbid that the era of persecution and martyrdom should begin again tomorrow!

As you can see, dear friend, the whole of history shows the Church's spiritual authority increasing or diminishing in the same proportions as its material independence. In their high significance, the facts I have just indicated are corroborated by another no less constant. It is claimed that territorial independence is not necessary for the Church; that the wealth of the clergy is rather an evil than a good; that poverty is much more suited to the spouse of a poor God, and gives her, today especially, a more universal and respected moral authority.

If this is so, why is it that all the princes, all the peoples, all the eras that have loved the Church the most, that have surrounded it with the most filial respect, have hastened to increase its material independence, paying it tribute

with rich properties, sometimes entire cities and provinces? Their love has been blind. If it had been clairvoyant, it would have abstained; if it had been clairvoyant, it would have reduced the Church to dependence and beggary. On the contrary, the heretical and schismatic princes, the impious and revolutionary governments that have robbed the Church and prevent it from acquiring, have alone understood the true interests of religion.

In this respect, Constantine, Charlemagne and their imitators were fools and very bad Christians; Henry VIII and his ilk, men of good sense and truly evangelical Christians. Garibaldi and Victor-Emmanuel, who today give the Pope no resting place for his head, are the world's first two Catholics!

And there are strong heads who allow themselves to be taken in by such a sophism, who defend it, who propagate it and who make it accepted! There remains another which I reserve examination for first correspondence.

All yours.